

A Confluence of Goals, Employee Development, and Resource Preservation

Since 1985 there have been no less than 30 workshops, seminars, or preservation-related projects completed at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park by the Williamsport Preservation Training Center (WPTC). These activities have ranged widely in scope from the total restoration of a significant

Park and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia are located at the dramatic merger of two great rivers, the Shenandoah and the Potomac. The historic lower town of Harpers Ferry NHP has also been the venue for the confluence of two National Park Service goals. The preservation of cultural resources and the work-centered preservation training of National Park Service maintenance and cultural resource employees have been successfully joined through the creative efforts of the two organizations. WPTC and Harpers Ferry NHP had forged a working relationship providing mutual benefits to each partner well before the current and well-deserved emphasis on partnerships as a means of achieving common goals. The recent reorganization of the USNPS has, in fact, placed an emphasis on this “sharing” between units of the system.

WPTC is the primary National Park Service training center for work-centered preservation and craft skills programs. As such, we work with park management and staff to creatively achieve park-oriented preservation maintenance programs. This has resulted in the implementation of numerous cultural resource projects throughout the park. Most of these are “bricks and mortar” projects, although several planning/design projects have also been completed.

One of the more notable preservation projects completed as a result of this partnership was the reconstruction of the historic (1857) Alfred Burton Jewelry Shop in lower town. This was a design/build project and included everything from research for the Architectural Data section of the Historic Structures Report to complete architectural drawings for the reconstruction of the small



Masons from WPTC and the Southeast Preservation Crew participated in the reconstruction of the Burton Jewelry Store foundation.

19th-century structure to the painstaking repair of a historic dry laid masonry wall; from the development of preservation maintenance work task procedures for the park-wide Inventory Condition and Assessment Program (ICAP) to the completion of Historic Structures Reports for individual buildings in the historic Lower Town National Register district. Integrated into every one of these efforts is the work-centered preservation training of National Park Service employees and the completion of part of the cultural resources program at the park. With each project averaging 8 participants it is not unreasonable to claim that over 240 employees have benefited from this partnership.

As most people know, Harpers Ferry National Historical

Williamsport Preservation Training Center

The role of the Williamsport Preservation Training Center (WPTC) is to support the preservation and maintenance of historic properties in the National Park Service by providing a comprehensive program of preservation education and work-centered training. WPTC uses historic preservation projects as its main vehicle for instructing preservation philosophy, building crafts, building technology, and project management skills.

Maintenance Helper Students from the Job Corps receive practical experience by repairing the foundation of the White Hall Tavern.

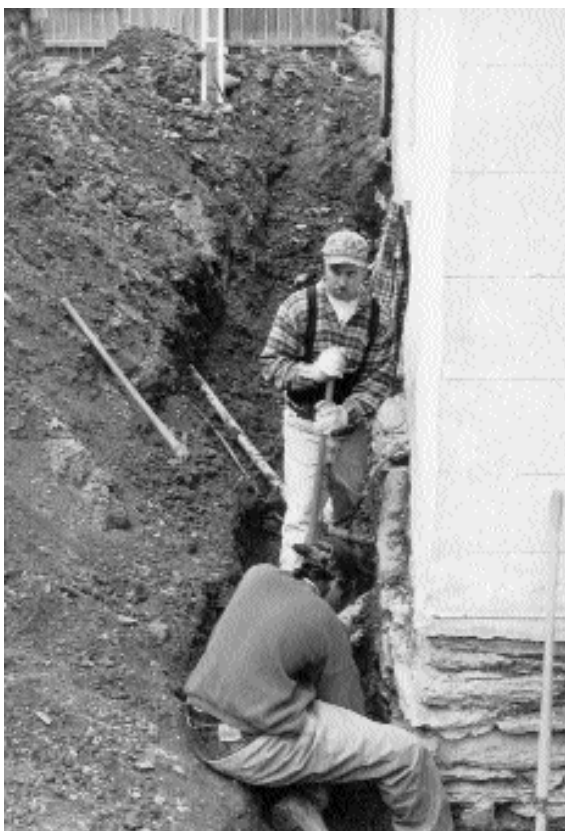
Photos from WPTC collection.

Experienced WPTC masons instruct a Job Corps student in the fine art of setting location stakes for a foundation.

wood frame building. It also included coordination with Harpers Ferry Center for installation of exhibits, and the reconstruction of the building using NPS maintenance employees from throughout the Service.

The WPTC historical architect conducted the research, investigated and planned the conservation of the remaining historic fabric, and designed and produced the set of architectural drawings used to reconstruct the building. The exhibit specialists (restoration) acted as project supervisors and rounded up the materials and equipment, and provided site coordination. The preservation craftspeople came from the in-house training program and provided the hands-on construction expertise.

WPTC coordinated the use of preservation and maintenance based employees from throughout the NPS to assist in the reconstruction by using its cross-training program. This program encourages employees from various parks to sign up for a "detail" on a preservation project. The length of the assignment is designed to be sufficient to provide a fulfilling work-centered preservation experience on an actual park project. On this project, masons from the Atlanta-based Southeast preservation crew participated in the dismantling and relaying of the foundation.



nance employees participated in a series of preservation projects at Harpers Ferry NHP. These projects also included full scale preservation and rehabilitation work in several park historic buildings as well as project management skills development. This program expanded the basic agreement to a multiple partnership and provided benefits to all.

Other experiences used for "hands-on" training included construction of replacement wooden doors, sashes, and shutters; repairs to historic brick and masonry foundations and walls; conservation of historic interior plaster and exterior stucco

systems; and repairs to historic roofing systems. Throughout this process, Harpers Ferry NHP has become a real-life laboratory for testing and proving all aspects of historic structure preservation!

The partnership program is designed to be flexible and has allowed for the inclusion of students and interns. Architectural students, in cooperative education programs, have participated in large-scale documentation and preservation planning projects. Interns, including foreign students, have worked to inventory historic structures, evaluate their condition, and make recommendations for preservation maintenance. They have worked side-by-side with park employees to develop maintenance-based preservation work-task procedures which will be used to program future maintenance needs.

These projects have served not only to preserve historic resources at Harpers Ferry NHP but have contributed toward the development of servicewide programs and systems. Preservation techniques honed on these projects have proven effective in other parks with similar resources, all the while providing essential training to NPS employees.

Other real benefits have come as a result of this teamwork. Several now standard preservation techniques and training strategies have been developed through these partnership projects. An example is the project-based Record of Treatment.



This document, now recommended by the NPS Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management¹ was born of the need to provide baseline documentation and recordkeeping for every project completed at the park.

The Record of Treatment is significant in the life of a historic structure because it becomes a permanent record of all work done during a certain defined project. While WPTC had been producing a report similar in content for a number of years, it was improved and refined as a result of the partnership projects completed by the WPTC and Harpers Ferry NHP teams working toward common goals. The insistence of the park Chief of Maintenance that an accurate record be kept of all project work was also influential.

All around, this type of "partnering" between Harpers Ferry NHP, other parks, and WPTC has proven to enhance employee skills and morale, and allowed for the completion of much needed preservation maintenance work. How better to pro-

vide leadership in the preservation of historic resources than to empower maintenance and preservation employees with the education, training, and confidence necessary to go forth and carry out successful preservation projects.

We hope that WPTC efforts to partner with parks like Harpers Ferry NHP will help to energize the National Park Service to continue its mission to preserve park resources for future generations.

Note

¹ National Park Service Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management (NPS-28) Release No. 4, August 1994, Chapter 8, pg.123.

Tom Vitanza, AIA, is a registered architect and has been affiliated with the WPTC team since completing his three-year training program in 1985. Senior Preservation Architect since 1993, he is responsible for coordinating design activities and has participated in many of the Harpers Ferry projects.

Selected Readings

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Many of these works are available in public libraries and most of them can also be purchased through the bookstore operated by the Harpers Ferry Historical Association by calling 1-800-821-5206.